

**City editor** Ellen Leech (510) 416-4822**SATURDAY** August 30, 1997

# Sandia plane sets altitude record

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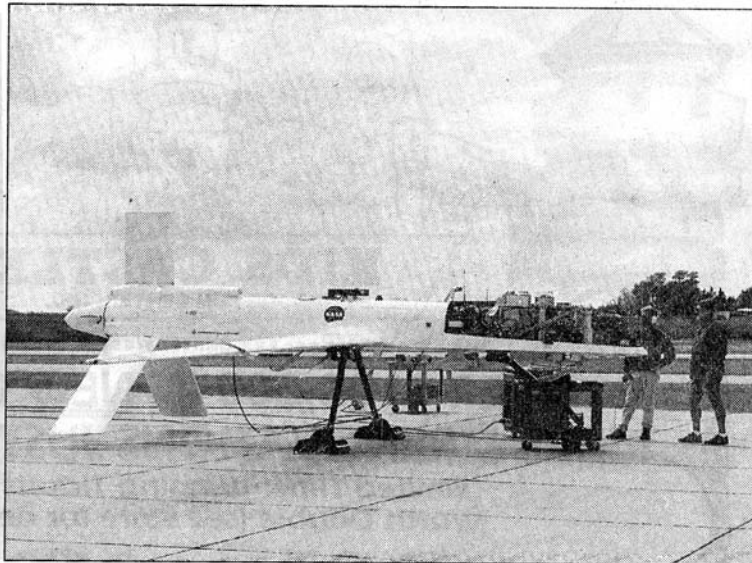
LIVERMORE — A slender, long-winged airplane designed to fly above violent thunderstorms has set an altitude record for aircraft of its kind, said researchers at Sandia National Laboratories.

The Altus 2, a remote-controlled model adapted from a military surveillance plane, soared to 43,500 feet during demonstrations this summer at Edwards Air Force Base, researchers said.

The record applies to unmanned aircraft for global climate research.

"It's exciting because it's a step toward the high-altitude capability that we ultimately want to have," said aerospace engineer Will Bolton.

The goal is 65,000 feet, nearly twice the altitude of commercial airliners and about equivalent to the altitudes of some spy planes.



**ARLEEN NG** — Staff

**Aerospace engineer Will Bolton is working on a new kind of airplane designed to fly over violent thunderstorms.**

Altitude is important because researchers want to gather data above the clouds, which end at 45,000 feet in the United States but extend to 60,000 feet above the tropics, a crucial region for

weather researchers.

Built by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc., the Altus is a variation on the Predator, a reconnaissance plane flown over Bosnia.